

Establishing the Objectives

Once each side has, at least, acknowledged the position of the other, the groundwork has been laid for establishing goals, or "objectives," that are acceptable, and ultimately beneficial to both union and management. The objectives are achieved through a series of "action steps". Each step is assigned to an appropriate group or combination of groups for implementation according to a timetable agreed to by all participants.

In addition to specific committees or programs that may result from the seminar, a joint-action union-management committee is established as a final step to oversee the goals and timetables. Follow-up meetings are scheduled by the mediators to monitor progress. This committee continues to act as a communication group at the plant to disseminate information and furnish progress reports to workers.

Success in Communication

Though specific problems vary from company to company depending on the size, structure, and bargaining groups involved, certain problems are endemic to the workplace. The most obvious one is communication breakdown, not only between supervisor and worker, but between plant managers and the work force and union officials and rank-and-file members. It is in this area of communication that the Relationship Improvement Program has been credited with most success.

Roadmap to Improved Relationships

After devoting three days to genuine communication, management and union emerge from the seminar armed with a list of common objectives that they have set themselves. More important, a commitment has been made to take specific actions to achieve those objectives. The Relationship Improvement Program is only the starting point, not a program in and of itself. The parties have, in fact, a "road map" to a relationship built on mutual respect. Like any relationship worth preserving, they must continue to work diligently to reach their destination.



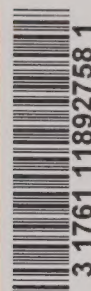
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Relationship Improvement Program

The *Relationship Improvement Program* is designed to do exactly that – improve union-management relations.

It assumes that both union and management acknowledge that, away from the bargaining table, there is a mutual advantage in establishing good communications, credibility and co-operation in their everyday relationship.

The program is an adaptation of the concept of *Relationship By Objectives* (RBO), developed in the United States. RBO has been used extensively since 1975 and has proved effective in the promotion, development and maintenance of sound relationships between employers and unions.

Involvement by the Ontario Conciliation and Mediation Service is conditional on several factors. Both unions and management must recognize that they need help, want help, and are ready to accept help. This means a "total commitment" from top management and a "broad base of support" from the local and international union involved. RBO cannot work without commitment and support from the top.

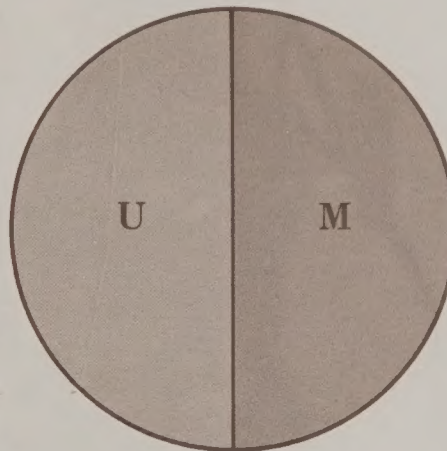
Seminar Format

Representatives of management and union usually attend a three-day seminar at a location away from the working environment. In some circumstances a series of single-day meetings may be used. Representatives range from top-level managers to first-line supervisors on the management side, and from international union officials to shop stewards on the union side.

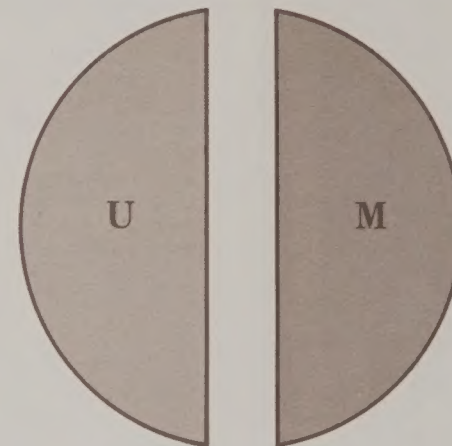
Under the close supervision of a team of mediators, the participants are divided into groups and subgroups for discussion and analysis of the particular problems that have caused disruptions in labour relations. Both sides are encouraged to be frank in their evaluations of "what's wrong with *them*." They are then asked to examine their own shortcomings and to prepare a list of "what's wrong with *us*." The theory behind this open discussion is that mutual distrust and suspicion, built up over long periods, must be aired.

Group Dynamics of the Relationship Improvement Program

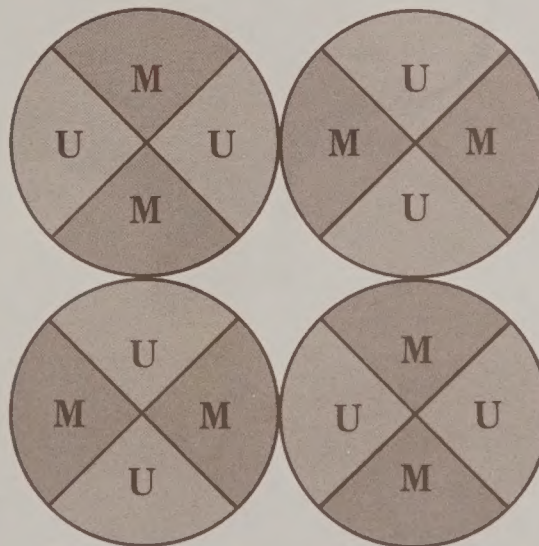
Joint U-M Group



Separate U-M Groups



Mixed U-M Teams



Throughout the Relationship Improvement Program seminar, union and management meet in different group formations as shown. Each group performs a variety of tasks and assignments at various phases of the program, and the groups are interchanged and utilized in order to maximize the flow of ideas between participants.